

Minnesota Writing Project

---Demonstration Lesson---

Title of lesson: Finding Voice within a Highly Structured Form

Suggested grade/age: middle/high school

Approximate time needed to complete lesson:

From inquiry to finished poem: one week

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson

This lesson helps students learn to read and understand a poem. It uses the inquiry process to allow students to discover the characteristics of the poem. Students then move on to use the poem as a mentor text as they write their own version.

I can understand the imagery/sound/form of a poem through a close reading.

I can use the inquiry process to discover the characteristics of a villanelle.

I can write my own villanelle.

Brief summary/outline of lesson

Students will do a close reading of the poem, “Do not Go Gentle into that Good Night,” by Dylan Thomas. They will annotate the poem to work through imagery, sound, and form. They then use the poem to discover the guideline/rules of a villanelle. Finally, they will use a scaffolded process to write their own villanelle.

Lesson Procedure:

1. Close Reading of “Do Not Go Gentle...”: Small group annotations
2. Clarify “rules” of a villanelle: Small group then large group
3. Examine imagery techniques for inspiration
4. Brainstorm people/groups and important messages
5. Compose Anchor lines (“A1/A2”) with rhyming words
6. Compose “b” lines with rhyming words
7. Compose remaining “a” lines using rhyming words
8. Plug into template/format
9. Revise for imagery and word choice

This lesson is used as part of a larger poetry unit in which students engage in reading, analyzing, reciting, and writing poetry. This is a good counterpart to writing free verse poetry, in which students are sometimes overwhelmed with the lack of guidelines in structure.

Related resources

Villanelle examples, such as “Do not Go Gentle into that Good Night” by Dylan Thomas and “One Art” by Elizabeth Bishop

Document camera or Smartboard are useful in modeling the annotation process.

Students will also need a copy of the poem, highlighter, and writing utensils.

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs

Anchor lines could be given to students.

Topic of villanelle could be changed to meet classroom needs.

Lesson by Katie Cady